

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**REPORT TO: STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION**

DATE: 9TH MARCH 2015

SUBJECT: MEMBERSHIP UPDATE 2014-2015

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Councillor D.G. Carter
Councillor W. David
Councillor D.M. Gray (Chair)
Councillor Mrs G.D. Oliver
Councillor Mrs M.E. Sargent
Councillor J. Taylor (Vice-Chair)

TEACHERS ASSOCIATIONS

Miss Helen Bartley (ATL)
Mrs Nicola L Boardman (NUT)
Mrs Bethan Davies (UCAC)
Mrs Helen Marsh (ASCL)
Mrs Laura Strange (NASUWT)
Vacancy (NAHT) - Mrs Christine Thompson resigned in October 2012

CHRISTIAN AND OTHER RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS

Rev Eryl Williams – (Baptist Church)
Mr Martyn Western (Roman Catholic Church)
Mrs Enfys Hawthorn (United Reformed Church)
Mrs Janet Jones (Church in Wales)
Lieutenant Carl Di-Palma (Salvation Army)

CO OPTED MEMBERS – 2 PLACES

(1) Mrs Rhianne Bradshaw (St James' Primary School)
(2) Mr Eddy Mushayanyama (VALREC)

OFFICERS

Mrs Keri Cole (Manager Learning, Education and Inclusion)
Mrs Vicky Thomas (Independent RE Consultant)

CLERK TO SACRE

Miss Rebecca Barrett
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BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

The British Humanist Association (BHA) is a registered charity.

Its President is Jim Al Khalili Professor of Theoretical Physics University of Surrey, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is Andrew Copson.

Professor Richard Dawkins, Professor Brian Cox, Stephen Fry, Sir Terrance Pratchett and Polly Toynbee are a few of its many distinguished supporters.

The BHA is a focus of humanist beliefs and is the biggest humanist organisation in Britain. It exists to support and represent humanists. It is well organised and provides funerals, weddings, civil partnership ceremonies and namings attended by over 300,000 people a year. It is widely recognised as representing a considered, rational, non-religious perspective on current issues and is consulted by government bodies, quangos, and professional organisations, including the Department for Education, Home Office, Foreign Office, Department of Health, Department for Communities and Local Government, Government Equalities Office, Ofsted, BMA, and the Human Genetics Commission. There is an All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group and a Humanist Philosophers' Group and a Defence Forces Group.

The BHA has been actively involved in supporting education about religions and non-religious beliefs in our classrooms for over fifty years. The BHA was a founder member of the Religious Education Council for England and Wales in 1973, and was involved in the development of the 2004 English Religious education: The non-statutory national framework, to which we gave our named support. The BHA was involved in the steering groups that developed the further English non-statutory programmes of study and attainment targets for key stage 3 and key stage 4/5 RE in 2007; the abandoned level descriptions and key stage 1/2 non-statutory programme of learning in 2010; and the 2010 non-statutory guidance. The BHA dedicate significant resources to producing classroom materials to support RE (such as the website <http://www.humanismforschools.org.uk/>) and to training RE PGCE students at a number of initial teacher training (ITT) providers across England. The BHA was a donor to the Celebrating RE month in March 2011, and Chief Executive Andrew Copson is a serving director and trustee of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales as well as a Vice Chair of the National Council for Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education, as a result of his position with the BHA.

Humanists have an essential role to play in advising the local authority about RE and collective worship – in helping to ensure that the beliefs and values of pupils and parents who are not religious are included in RE. Inclusiveness is an important principle underpinning good RE, which usually sees itself today as concerned with a range of responses to ultimate questions and ethical issues, as well as offering pupils the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and values and to learn about those of others.

Amongst other references to non-religious and philosophical perspectives, page 6 of the 2002 National exemplar framework for religious education for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales emphasises that learners 'plan investigations by gathering and utilising a range of religious and non-religious sources and use these to evaluate and justify their personal responses.' Page 8 adds that 'Religious education contributes to Wales, Europe and the World by raising challenging questions from religious and non-religious perspectives'. Page 13 encourages 'in-depth investigations of religion and religious/non-religious ideas evident in [learners'] locality in Wales.'

Page 8 of the 2011 Religious education Guidance for Key Stages 2 and 3: Key messages for planning learning and teaching emphasises that pupils should 'engage with fundamental questions to investigate interpretations of meaning and the purpose of existence as raised by religious and non-religious people alike.' Page 25 adds that 'In religious education, learners will have opportunities to plan investigations by gathering and utilising a range of religious and non-religious sources and use these to evaluate and justify their personal responses'.

The 2011 Exemplifying learner profiles at Key Stages 2 and 3 in religious education: Additional guidance also emphasises the importance of learning about non-religious beliefs, and cites a number of examples.

Amongst other references, page 70 of the 2009 Religious education Guidance for 14 to 19-year-olds explains 'Pupils should be given opportunities to investigate fundamental questions from a variety of informed religious and non-religious sources to evaluate a range of possibilities and begin to draw reasoned conclusions based on the evidence gathered.

There is a wealth of support for the teaching of humanism in schools from the 1989 Religious Education Council of England and Wales' Handbook for SACREs, ASCs and Schools (1989), indicated that one generally accepted aim of RE would be, "To encourage knowledge and understanding of religions and similar world views." Humanism can be seen as such a world view.

In 2003 the Church of England supported teaching about atheism and Humanism in RE and in 2005 The Archbishop of Canterbury, in a talk to the RE Council in May 2005 (full transcript at www.religiouseducationcouncil.org), said: "A good religious education assists a person in being serious..." and made useful distinctions between atheism and humanism: " Humanism, I regard as a much wider word. Which while it assumes that you can't talk with confidence or authority about the divine, is more interested in the innate capacities of human beings to make meaning and to sustain meaning together."

Five important humanist beliefs focus on morality, meaning and purpose, inspiration, knowledge and evidence:

- Humanists believe in shared moral values, based on human nature and experience alone. They take responsibility for their own actions, and believe that we should try to live good lives and help others to do so.
- Humanists seek to make the best of this life by creating meaning and purpose for themselves and by living life to the full.
- Humanists are inspired by art and culture and the rich natural world, and motivated by the desire for happiness and good relationships with others.
- Humanists look to experience, science and reason for their understanding of how the world works.
- Humanists do not believe in things for which there is no good evidence, such as gods or an afterlife, and they do not pray or worship or practice unnecessary self-denial.

Ken Chamberlain 20/08/2014